

## “Results of the Quick Impact Project in Nepal”



### 1.0 Background of the Quick Impact Project

Nepal has seen a significant improvement in the gross enrolment rate of girls from primary to higher education, as described in Section 3-5 on education. However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) has warned that the closure of schools due to COVID-19 will result in approximately 2.15 million children dropping out of school, further widening the education gap between urban and rural areas, as well as increasing gender, ethnicity, disability, and economic disparities, and adding the digital divide as a new factor. In addition, there is a serious concern that children will lose their safety net as they lose their place (i.e., school), and issues such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), early and child marriage, and human trafficking will become more severe. In addition, an increasing number of children are suffering from mental health deterioration due to anxiety about their future, fear of being infected with COVID-19, and a lack of opportunities to interact with their friends. Table 2-1 summarizes the situation during COVID-19 and the challenges addressed by the Quick Impact Project (QIP).

Table 1: Situation during the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges met by the QIP

Situation during COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased risk of drop-out</li> <li>● Increased educational gaps between students who has access to distance education and those without access</li> <li>● Loss of safety net and deterioration in mental health among children</li> </ul>		
Challenges identified through the Study	Demand side	Supply side	
	Girls and families	Schools	Distance learning program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>① Fear of being infected with COVID-19</li> <li>② Digital divide</li> <li>③ Worsening economic situation of parents</li> <li>④ Increased burden of unpaid work</li> <li>⑤ Harmful practices that hinder girls' education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>① Unable to introduce online and distance education</li> <li>② Unable to maintain schools in a safe manner in response to COVID-19</li> <li>③ limited capacity to teach/support students from gender and social inclusion perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>① Program not known to the public</li> <li>② Do not have access to device</li> <li>③ Insufficient content of distance learning program</li> </ul>
Challenges responded by the QIP	Motivation to study is declining among girls due to ①~⑤ (Common) Lack an understanding of the challenges faced by women and girls under COVID-19	① and ③	Difficulties in effectively implementing newly developed distance learning program due to ①~③

In response, the QIP aims to address the following five challenges identified in this study:

- 1) The motivation to study is declining among girls.
- 2) Schools, particularly those in rural areas, are not able to introduce online and distance education
- 3) Schools have limited capacity to teach/support students from gender and social inclusion perspectives.
- 4) Families and schools lack an understanding of the challenges faced by women and girls under COVID-19.
- 5) There are difficulties in effectively implementing newly developed distance learning programs under COVID-19.

The objective of the QIP was, “Through gender-responsive radio educational programs, educational opportunities are provided to girls during school closure and girls attain life skills<sup>1</sup> that can help raise their motivation toward the continuation of their studies.” Two hypotheses were verified through the implementation of the QIP.

Hypothesis 1: Through the provision of learning opportunities through radio programs on academic and life skills and the activities of monitoring groups, girls’ motivation toward their studies is maintained and the number of dropouts is reduced.

Hypothesis 2: An understanding of the challenges facing girls during the COVID-19 pandemic by the stakeholders (parents, teachers, local government, classmates) surrounding the girls will enable the girls to continue their education.

## 2.0 Design of the Quick Impact Project

### 2-1. Overview of the Quick Impact Project

**Name of the Quick Impact Project:** My Radio School, My Future

**Duration:** November 16, 2020, to July 31, 2021 (8.5 months)

Initially planned for seven months until June 15, 2021, the project period was extended by 1.5 months following a lockdown in Nepal on April 29 due to the second wave of COVID-19.

**Implementing Agency:** Rural Education and Environment Development Center (REED Nepal)

REED is an NGO with extensive experience in supporting the education sector in rural and remote areas and is a member of the Curriculum Committee of MOEST. It has been providing educational programs via radio since the initial stages of the COVID-19 epidemic and has expertise in the production of programs and the implementation of distance learning.

**Target Areas:** Six districts (Bajhang, Rupandehi, Sindhli, Okhaldhunga, Taplejung, and Khotang) in the four provinces shown in Figure 2-1 were selected as target areas for the QIP, where REED has experience in providing support and where there are challenges in accessing education under COVID-19.



<sup>1</sup> Life skills education is designed to develop students’ self-awareness and problem-solving skills, as well as their ability to maintain interpersonal relationships, exercise leadership, make decisions, communicate effectively, and cope with difficult situations.

Figure 2-1: Target areas

**Beneficiaries:** Sixty public schools were selected. In each school, ten members (nine girls and one boy) were selected as a monitoring group from Grades 6 to 10 (ages 10–14). Grades 6 to 10 were selected because students in these grades are more likely to drop out of school during school closure. In selecting the students, grade, ethnicity, disability, and students’ personal interest were taken into consideration. One boy was added with the aim of using his network to encourage other boys and socially disadvantaged boys to participate in the project. The total number of direct beneficiaries was 600 (540 girls and 60 boys), and the total number of indirect beneficiaries was 8,400.

## 2-2. Outline of the Quick Impact Project

The objective of the QIP was, “Through gender-responsive radio educational programs, educational opportunities are provided to girls during school closure and girls attain life skills that can help raise their motivation toward the continuation of their studies,” with the following three outputs (see Table 2-3 for details).

Output 1: Through gender-responsive academic radio education program, girls’ motivation towards continuation of their studies are maintained

Output 2: Through gender-responsive life skills radio education program, girls and boys in the monitoring group understand the issues faced by girls under COVID-19

Output 3: Through participating in an essay contest on "My dream, my future" (Mero Sapana: Mero Bhabisya), student’s motivation toward their studies is promoted

Table 2-2 summarizes the challenges and the support provided by the QIP.

Table 2: Challenges and the support provided by the QIP

Challenges responded by the QIP	Support provided by the QIP
1. Motivation to study is declining among girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute WASH materials</li> <li>• Support field officers’ follow up activities</li> <li>• Support monitoring group activities</li> <li>• Implement Essay Competition</li> </ul>
2. Digital divide Inability to introduce online and distance education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadcast gender responsive academic radio education program</li> </ul>
3. limited capacity to teach/support students from gender and social inclusion perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop "GESI Responsive School Education Guideline/Facilitation Handbook"</li> <li>• Conduct training on GESI to teachers</li> </ul>
4. Lack of understanding about challenges faced by women and girls under COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct coordination and consultation meeting with parents and line agencies/Local Governments</li> <li>• Provide information on the issues faced by women and girls under COVID-19 through life skills radio education program and public service announcements</li> <li>• Support monitoring group activities</li> </ul>
5. Difficulties in effectively implement distance learning programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute radios to allow access to distance programs</li> <li>• Distribute worksheets and conduct quizzes</li> <li>• Support field officers’ follow up activities</li> <li>• Develop “GESI Responsive Radio Program Production Guideline” and conduct training</li> </ul>

Under COVID-19, the government and development partners are also implementing distance education via radio, but the following are some of the unique characteristics of this QIP.

- 1) As the radio program was broadcast, worksheets corresponding to the program were distributed, and Field Officers (FOs) and school teachers provided periodic monitoring.

In addition to academic programs, life skill programs were also broadcast.

- 2) Based on the learning from the radio program, monitoring groups planned and implemented their own activities to disseminate important gender-related messages to other students.
- 3) Orientation and gender training was provided to parents, teachers, local government, and radio stations, working in close collaboration.
- 4) At the end of the project, an essay contest on “My dream, my future” was organized to help students internalize lessons learned from the radio program and provide a chance to declare their dreams for the future through the essay.

When the QIP started, all the schools were closed. Schools started to re-open from December 2020 to March 2021, during which face-to-face activities were conducted. From April 2021 onward, all the activities were shifted online as schools were closed again due to the second wave of COVID-19.

Table 3: Project Design Matrix

	Narrative Summary	Indicators
Project Objective	Through gender-responsive radio educational programs, educational opportunities are provided to girls during school closure and girls attain life skills that can help raise their motivation toward the continuation of their studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 80% of girls in monitoring group re-enroll in schools</li> <li>- 60% of girls in monitoring group pass proficiency test</li> <li>- 80% of girls in monitoring group attain life skills.</li> </ul>
Outputs	<p>1. Through gender-responsive academic radio education program, girls’ motivation towards continuation of their studies are maintained</p> <p>2. Through gender-responsive life skills radio education program, girls and boys in the monitoring group understand the issues faced by girls under COVID-19</p> <p>3. Through participating in an essay contest on "My dream, my future" (Mero Sapana: Mero Bhabisya), student’s motivation toward their studies is promoted</p>	<p>1-1 Updated gender-responsive guideline.</p> <p>1-2 72 episodes of academic radio lessons broadcasted.</p> <p>1-3 70% of monitoring group members obtained more than 50% of scores based on radio lesson in post-test. (Math-Science-Technology: MST)</p> <p>2-1 72 episodes on life skill education broadcasted through 8 FM stations.</p> <p>2-2. 80% of girls in monitoring group attain life skills.</p> <p>2-3 75% of monitoring group members passed the life skilled education in post-test.</p> <p>2-4 Evaluation/feedbacks/ review by monitoring groups/listeners are conducted 14 times.</p> <p>3-1 500 applicants in essay contest</p> <p>3-2 Contents of awarded essays</p>
Activities	<p>1-1 Coordination and consultation meeting with line agencies/Local Governments at local level</p> <p>1-2 Gender-responsive School Education Guideline Preparation</p> <p>1-3 Preparation and conduction of Pre-test and Post-test to Monitoring Groups</p> <p>1-4 Selection and Formation of Monitoring Groups(90 girls, 10 boys)</p> <p>1-5 Orientation and facilitation to Monitoring Groups</p>	

	Narrative Summary	Indicators
	1-6 Gender-responsive Remedial/Academic/MST Learning Material Production 1-7 Worksheets Preparation and Distribution 1-8 Volunteer/Local Teachers' Mobilization and Orientation 1-9 Broadcasting GESI responsive MST radio lessons 1-10 Conduct monitoring and Talent hunt  2-1 Develop contents/episodes of GESI responsive life skill radio education program 2-2 One day Onsite Training on GESI to focal teachers/volunteers 2-3 Gender-responsive Life Skills Radio Lesson Broadcasting 2-4 One Day Orientation/Parental Education (Onsite/Online) 2-5 Conduct monitoring group discussion/review on the themes 2-6 Distribution of radios, WASH and stationeries to Monitoring Groups 2-7 Pre-test and Post-test of Life Skill radio education  3-1 Develop the evaluation criteria for the “Mero Sapana: My Future” Essay Competition 3-2 Call for Application from radios (Advertisement/Jingle) 3-3 Formation and Mobilization of Evaluation Committee 3-4 Award to Winners	

### 2-3. Implementation Structure

As shown in the implementation structure of the QIP in Figure 2-2, REED staff who have expertise in radio-based distance learning took the lead in managing the entire project, producing radio programs, and coordinating with 10 radio stations. The female FOs, one for each of the six districts, provided guidance to the monitoring groups and coordinated together with other stakeholders, including gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) focal teachers, school teachers, local government officials, police, and health volunteers. The main roles of the monitoring group were to listen to a 30-minute radio program (144 episodes in total) six days a week, to encourage their friends to listen to the radio program, and to plan and implement the monitoring group activities and events from the lessons they had learned from the radio program.

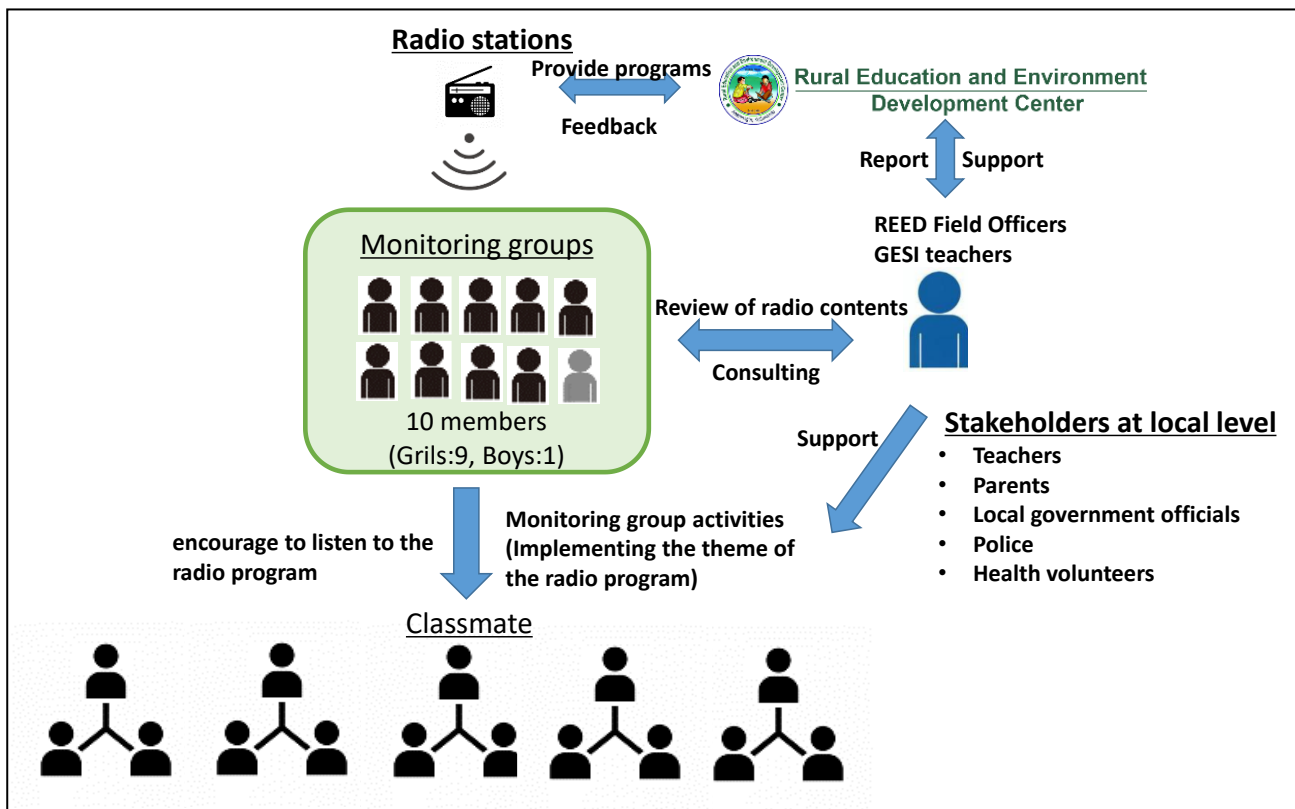


Figure 2-2: Implementation system

### 3. Outputs of the Quick Impact Project and Process of the Project Implementation

#### 3-1. Output 1: Through Gender-Responsive Academic Radio Education Program, Girls' Motivation Towards Continuation of Their Studies are Maintained

Output 1 was achieved as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Achievements of Output 1

Indicators	Achievements
1-1 Updated gender-responsive guideline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "GESI Responsive Radio Program Production Guideline" was prepared at the beginning of the project to guide all the radio program/lessons' producers and lessons prepared as per the same.</li> <li>• "GESI Responsive School Education Guideline/Facilitation Handbook" was developed and distributed to 200 schools, including non-target schools.</li> </ul>
1-2 72 episodes of academic radio lessons broadcasted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The episodes for the academic lessons were, math (35 episodes) and science (37 episodes), which girls tend to have difficulties in catching up.</li> <li>• The programs were designed to attract students' attention by relating daily life to the themes of math and science.</li> <li>• In order for students to concentrate for 30 minutes, drama (in the form of dialogue) and music were incorporated, and a simple quiz on the theme was given at the end of the program so that students could learn while having fun by posting it on SNS.</li> </ul>
1-3 70% of monitoring group members obtained more than 50% of scores based on radio lesson in post-	Proficiency test/post-test was conducted with all 600 children and all of them have passed. The average score of the test was 98.

test. (Math-Science-Technology: MST)	
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In the process of implementing Output 1, the following are the changes that were observed and points that were taken with due consideration from a gender perspective.

### (1) Establishing an environment for learning

Only 10% of the target schools have an ICT facility, and only 30% of the 600 monitoring group members have a smartphone or other devices that connect to the Internet.<sup>2</sup> Although radio is available in most households, it is shared with other family members, making it difficult for students to use it when they need it. For the students to listen to the program and engage in activities for seven months, it was necessary to secure radios that the students could use freely. Thus, radios were distributed along with WASH materials to provide a safe environment for students to study.



Photo 2-1: Distribution of radios to monitoring group

Many of the target schools were unable to provide distance learning during school closures, forcing students to self-study. Therefore, the expectations for the QIP were high, and there were many requests to expand the project to over 100–150 girls in each target grade/school, rather than focusing on nine monitoring girls and distributing radios to them. Some schools, such as in Rupandehi District, decided to purchase and distribute radios from their budget for the remaining students because they believed that the QIP would bring positive learning to the students.

When the radio program started to broadcast, the students in the monitoring group gathered at home or at the Chautara (a resting place for people under the outdoor Bodhi tree) in the village to listen to the program.



Photo 2-2: Monitoring group studying

However, 30% of the girls reported that the amount of time spent doing domestic chores has increased compared to the time before the COVID-19, making it difficult for some girls to find the time to study<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, an orientation for parents was conducted to explain the purpose of the QIP, the contents of the radio programs, and the schedule of the program and to ask for their cooperation. With the understanding that there is an existing digital gender gap in distance learning, radios were distributed, students were taught how to use them, and parents were requested to support and create a space where girls could study during the program.

### (2) Change to gender-responsive teaching

<sup>2</sup> REED Nepal (2020) Baseline Survey Report

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

The “GESI Responsive Radio Program Production Guideline” was developed to guide radio program producers to develop GESI responsive programs. The guidelines include using gender-sensitive and inclusive terminologies, not using examples that reinforce gender stereotyping roles, respecting the opinions of women and girls, and consciously selecting women experts when seeking experts’ opinions. After the program was produced, it was audited by a gender auditor before broadcasting.

Gender-sensitive teaching practices are also important in schools. However, in the baseline survey, 36.7% of the pilot school principals responded that they did not know about gender-sensitive teaching<sup>4</sup>, which implies that it is not a common teaching practice in most schools. Therefore, the QIP organized training for GESI formal teachers and substitute teachers using the “GESI Responsive School Education Guideline/Facilitation Handbook,” which was developed by an official of the MOEST for this QIP. The training was highly appreciated, and the local government requested more copies to distribute to other schools in the district, and the project responded by printing 200 copies.

The GESI focal teacher, together with the FOs, monitored the group members to check their learning status and the situation of girls during school closures, and they began to think more about how the school should respond to the specific needs of adolescent girls than prior to receiving the training. For example, as shown in Case 1, the school established a complaint handling mechanism where students can complain anonymously to the school by setting up a suggestion box and, as shown in Case 2, the school reviewed the method of distributing sanitary napkins, which shows that schools become more gender-responsive.

### (3) Connecting the subject to everyday life to make it interesting

Radio, unlike video, can only convey information through audio. Unlike online classes, it is impossible to conduct multiple lessons for different grades at the same time. Therefore, content that could cover multiple grades was

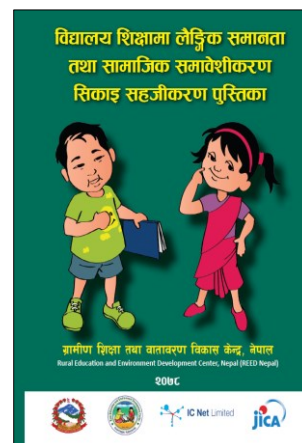


Photo 2-3: GESI Responsive School Education Guideline/Facilitation Handbook

#### **Case 1: Establishing a complaint handling mechanism**

After exchanging opinions with the monitoring group, teachers realized the importance of establishing a complaint handling mechanism where students can make suggestions to the school. Thus, they set up a suggestion box in the school where students can freely post their opinions. One day, a student posted, "The inside of the girls' restroom is too dark, making the restroom dirty and difficult to use," which was immediately reported to the principal and action was taken to remedy it.

#### **Case 2: Improving the distribution method of sanitary napkins**

Sanitary napkins are distributed to girls at private schools, but few students come to receive them. When a monitoring group was discussing menstrual hygiene under the COVID-19 pandemic (not having access to sanitary napkins) and harmful social practices such as Chhaupadi, some students mentioned that it is uncomfortable to receive sanitary napkins from male teachers. Thus, the distributing method was reviewed.

<sup>4</sup> ibid.



selected. As the number of episodes to be broadcast during the seven-month pilot period was limited to 72 episodes, REED decided to broadcast science and math-focused programs in line with the government's policy of encouraging girls to study science and mathematics<sup>5</sup>. REED knew from its past experience that many girls tend to think that science and mathematics are difficult and that they are not good at them. Therefore, REED focused on connecting how science and mathematics are used in their everyday lives to make the subjects interesting to girls. For example, in mathematics, they explained why calculation is required by using profit and loss, interest, currency exchange, discounts, electricity bills, and telephone bills. In explaining how to find the area of a triangle and the three-square theorem, an example was given to calculate the amount of material needed to build a roof of a house. In science, the theme of plants and animals was connected to the theme of ecosystems and natural disasters. By explaining metals, plastics, and recycled waste, students learned about waste disposal. Through these episodes, students could easily connect science to their local environment, which is being destroyed. As a result, students voluntarily planted saplings brought from their homes in the school garden and flower beds and started sorting garbage at school.

#### **(4) Ways to motivate students to learn**

The MOEST and its development partners provide radio and on-demand lessons during school closures, but since the lessons are only taught through broadcasting, schools, parents, and students are not fully informed about the content of the lessons. In addition, most of the programs did not provide supplementary materials. It was therefore difficult to assess the extent to which the radio programs contributed to students' learning. To address this, the QIP took the following measures:

- Created supplementary materials (worksheets) aligned with the radio program so that FOs could check students' learning progress.
- At the end of the radio program, a simple three-question quiz related to the lesson (e.g., Who first discovered the laws of motion?) was provided to motivate the students. Students would reply to the quiz via social networking service (SNS), and one of the students who answered correctly received a mobile phone recharge card.
- FOs, GESI focal teachers, and science and math teachers regularly visited the monitoring group to check if students were listening and to follow up on their studies.
- The radio station regularly interviewed the students and incorporated their opinions into the program.
- To summarize the learnings from the radio program, an essay contest was organized.

Through these measures, students were motivated to actively answer quizzes and look forward to hearing their own voices on radio. In addition, during regular monitoring, they could ask questions on the points they did not understand, which deepened their learning.

#### **Case 3: Improving ICT skills**

Even in rural areas in Nepal, mobile phone ownership is high. Students learned how to use SNS by replying to quizzes via it. Students' improved ICT skills brought about positive outcomes. For instance, a girl, who had problems during the school closure, consulted teachers via SNS. In addition, several girls taught their mothers and other family members how to use mobile phones and smartphones.

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<sup>5</sup> Education Review Office (2018) National Assessment of Student Achievement, 2017

**(5) Not missing out a chance to learn: allowing girls to learn at a time when they can easily listen**

Radio programs were broadcast six times a week, except Saturdays, twice a day, with each episode lasting 30 minutes. There were 144 episodes on academic and life skills. The programs were broadcast at 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. when girls could easily find the time to study. In addition, the broadcast radio programs were uploaded at the REED’s YouTube site<sup>6</sup> so that they could listen repeatedly if they had access to the Internet. Through these efforts, 97% of the students responded that they were able to listen to the radio programs and continue their studies<sup>7</sup>.



Photo 2-4: Listening to the radio lessons under the light of an oil lamp (Taplejung District)

The strength of online education is that, unlike regular school classes, as long as students have an environment to study, they can study at convenient times and repeatedly listen to the episode until they understand. Although online education is still at the trial stage in Nepal, it has a high potential to help overcome the obstacles that girls face in accessing education, such as the inability to attend school because of distance or not being able to arrive at school on time due to domestic chores.

**Case 4: Adjusting the broadcasting time of the radio programs to the target listeners**

Prior to fixing the time of broadcasting, the project checked the convenient time for girls to listen to the radio. Similarly, three-minute short public service announcements (Jingle) on such matters as domestic violence, human trafficking, dowry, early marriage, child labor, online harassment, harmful social practices, women's empowerment, caste, and bullying were created and broadcast just before news programs.

**3-2. Output 2: Through Gender-Responsive Life Skills Radio Education Program, Girls and Boys in the Monitoring Group Understand the Issues Faced by Girls Under COVID-19**

Output 2 aimed to raise the awareness of the girls and boys in the monitoring group to understand the issues faced by girls under COVID-19 by broadcasting life skills radio programs related to gender issues. As shown in Table 2-5, 72 episodes were produced and broadcast. Through the program, monitoring groups “learn” about gender issues, “think” about the subject, and “put them into action” by disseminating the message to a wider audience in the school/community and monitoring group activities. According to the end-line survey, 95% of the girls and 92% of the boys replied that the life skills programs were very good and would like to have continuous programs in the future<sup>8</sup>.

In the process of implementing Output 2, the following are the changes that were observed and points that were taken with due consideration from a gender perspective.

Table 5: Achievements of Output 2

Indicators	Achievements
2-1 72 episodes on life skill education broadcasted through 8 FM stations.	72 life skills episodes were broadcast, focusing on gender issues in five areas of analytical issues (SGBV, SRHR, education, economic activities,

<sup>6</sup> Radio episodes REED produced are uploaded in <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh7Z7fJESNJozWeD1W6Hjg/videos>

<sup>7</sup> REED Nepal (2021) End-line Survey Report

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

	and ICT) and including career counseling.
2-2. 80% of girls in monitoring group attain life skills.	Based on the entries in the worksheet, it was confirmed that all the monitoring group members (600 people) regularly listened to the radio program, which facilitated their understanding of the theme.
2-3 75% of monitoring group members passed the life skilled education in post-test.	98% were able to answer correctly in post-test exams.
2-4 Evaluation/feedbacks/ review by monitoring groups/listeners are conducted 14 times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of 14 review sessions were held twice a month in the monitoring groups in all 60 schools. Through the review sessions, the monitoring groups examined how they could disseminate their learning to students outside the group, and about 250 monitoring group activities were planned and implemented.</li> <li>• Several activities were implemented in collaborate with other students, parents, police, and local government.</li> </ul>

### (1) "Learn" about gender issues through life skills programs

Life skills aim to foster students' ability to cope with gender-related challenges. In the QIP, 72 episodes were produced on issues faced by girls, focusing on the five areas of analysis (SGBV, health services, economic activities, education, and digital technologies) addressed in this survey. The main contents covered in the life skills programs are as follows:

Table 6: Contents covered in the life skills programs

Five main areas of analytical issues	Contents
SGBV	Gender discrimination and violence in our daily lives (domestic violence, early marriage, forced marriage, child abuse, child labor)
Healthcare	COVID-19, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) activities, body and mind, stress management, and nutrition in adolescent girls
Economic activities	Savings, #Me Too movement, career counseling
Education	Right to education, communication, decision making and problem solving
Digital technologies	ICT tools, how to use them, risks of online tools

It was found that the students' understanding of gender issues deepened through life skills programs. For example, when asked, "Have you faced SGBV or do you know someone experiencing SGBV?" in both the baseline and end-line surveys, the response increased from 5.9% in the baseline survey to 13.4% in the end-line survey, which was more than double<sup>9</sup>. The reason for this increase was not that SGBV was increasing per se, but it indicated that students understood what SGBV was and that what they had experienced or observed were SGBV cases. Similarly, the percentage of girls skipping school during menstruation decreased from 12% to 9.4%<sup>10</sup>. Thus, it can be said that girls who previously had little knowledge about gender issues acquired the right knowledge.

Furthermore, since the program was broadcast when other family members were also present, they listened to the program. When the parents were asked if they had listened to the radio program, 98.6% of the respondent mothers and 98.2% of the respondent fathers replied that they had listened to the radio program several times. In addition, 22% of the respondent mothers and 14% of the respondent fathers replied that they listened to the radio program

<sup>9</sup> REED Nepal (2021) Final Report

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

with their children regularly.<sup>11</sup> This shows that the program was able to deliver its messages on gender not only to girls but also to a wider audience, including parents and teachers.

## (2) "Think" about gender issues

The monitoring groups met regularly to receive study advice from FOs and GESI focal teachers, as well as to exchange ideas among the members on topics that were broadcast in the life skills programs. For example, when discussing the reasons for not going to school during menstruation and harmful practices such as Chhaupadi, there were comments such as, "I was not given nutritious food during menstruation, so it was very difficult,"<sup>12</sup> "I don't want to go to school during menstruation because the toilets at school are dirty," and "I am ashamed to be teased by boys." It was an opportunity for everyone to think about the obstacles that made it difficult for girls to go to school.



Photo 2-5: Review of the monitoring group

## (3) "Put into action"

The monitoring group also energetically organized activities that involved other students (student-to-student approach). Since it was the time when school re-opened, more than 250 activities were implemented in all the target schools, which also led more students to listen to the radio program.

The most common monitoring-group activities were contests for drawings, speeches, poems, songs, and quizzes on gender equality. In the past, schools conducted similar activities under extracurricular activities, but few cases focused on gender and social inclusion issues.



Photo 2-6: A painting contest on gender issues



Photo 2-7: A play on child marriage



Photo 2-8: A speech contest on gender issues

Below are some of the good practices that the monitoring groups carried out in the five areas of analysis, which shows that they have collaborated with the police department, health volunteers, and other organizations and tried to disseminate important gender issues to students.

### **Case 5: [SGBV] SGBV victims can consult police**

<sup>11</sup> REED Nepal (2021) End-line Survey Report

<sup>12</sup> REED Nepal (2021) Final Report

The monitoring groups organized a child safety class for all students in collaboration with the police station, where they learned about human trafficking and violence against children. A police officer explained SGBV and demonstrated simple self-defense techniques. The students who participated in the class said that they were afraid of police officers, but now they understand that police officers are on their side when they face any kind of SGBV. They also said that they now understand that SGBV comprises various types of violence.

### **Case 6: [Health] Acquiring correct knowledge on reproductive health**

The baseline survey showed that 53.2% of the girls had missed school during menstruation and 9.4% of the girls were still skipping school during menstruation<sup>13</sup>. Thinking about what could be done to overcome the situation so that girls can go to school during menstruation, the monitoring groups, in collaboration with GESI focal teachers and local health volunteers, organized training on reproductive health and the use of sanitary napkins. In Nepal, there are few opportunities to learn about reproductive health issues; therefore, boys also participated in the training. One girl who participated said, “I understood that there is no need to feel ashamed,” and one boy said, “I felt that I should not tease girls anymore.”

As mentioned above, the teachers also began to think about reproductive health issues, and they have improved their method of distributing sanitary napkins and the hygiene of the restrooms.

### **Case 7: [Health] Students take the lead in controlling COVID-19 infection in schools**

REED prepared and distributed its original “School Reopening Facilitation Handbook” in accordance with government policy. Many public school facilities in rural areas, including the target schools, have small classrooms, making it difficult to secure social distance, and many do not have Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities. In fact, 14 of the 60 target schools (23.3%) did not have separate toilets for boys and girls,<sup>14</sup> and some schools did not have water supply systems, making it difficult to implement infection control measures. At the request of the schools, REED prepared COVID-19-related educational materials (the three Cs<sup>15</sup>, wearing masks, etc.) and educational materials on SGBV under COVID-19 (see Photo 2-9), and took measures such as printing posters at the expense of each school and displaying them at schools. However, infection control is difficult to achieve without behavioral changes to all the stakeholders in the school. Therefore, the monitoring group took the initiative to



Photo 2-9: Educational materials on SGBV



Photo 2-10: Portable hand-washing facility



Photo 2-11: Promoting WASH activities

<sup>13</sup> REED Nepal (2020) Baseline Survey Report

<sup>14</sup> REED Nepal (2021) Final Report

<sup>15</sup> The three Cs are closed spaces, crowded places, and close-contact settings

improve the school environment to tackle COVID-19 infection prevention measures by filling buckets with water for students to wash their hands, installing trash cans, and promoting WASH activities in the schools so that students can use toilets in a hygienic manner.

#### **Case 8: [Education] Change to mixed seating arrangement**

In an effort to address gender-related challenges in our daily lives, the monitoring group proposed that the school change from a free seating system to mixed seating arrangements in the classroom. By using a mixed seating arrangement, boys and girls were more likely to exchange opinions in group work, and teachers were more likely to ask both boys and girls to express their opinions.



Photo 2-12: From a free seating system to mixed seating arrangements

#### **Case 9: [Economic activities] Developing the habit of saving**

After learning about profit and loss in a math course on a radio program, the monitoring group encouraged students to save money because more families are facing financial difficulties due to COVID-19. They researched on mobile banking, informed parents about its advantages and disadvantages, and helped those who were interested to open accounts.



Photo 2-13: Promoting savings

#### **Case 10: [Digital Technologies] Proper use of SNS**

Smartphones are rapidly becoming popular in Nepal, but many people are unable to use functions other than making calls. Therefore, the monitoring group taught each other how to search for information and how to send messages. The girls also taught their families, which helped to develop their digital skills. The teachers said that they were now receiving more SNS messages from the students' parents.

In addition, among the entries for the essay contest, there were essays such as, "Before learning about the precautions in using the smartphones, I casually talked to a man whom I did not know; it was a dangerous act" and "I now understand the importance of strong passwords." This shows that the program has enhanced students' understanding of the dangers of social media and how to use it properly.

#### **(4) Behavioral change through "learn," "think," and "put into action"**

As mentioned above, by learning about gender issues through radio programs, girls acquired knowledge. They then discussed the issues with their peers in the monitoring group and internalized the learning on their own. Finally, they involved other students and people in the community in the monitoring group activities, where girls became

“change agents” to influence other people.

First, when asked how they had changed, many girls commented that their sense of self-esteem had improved. During the focus group discussion, many principals and GESI focal teachers commented that they were surprised to see girls who used to be very shy giving speeches in front of other students. Similarly, radio station staff commented that the girls had been running away from the microphone in the beginning, but now they were able to express their own thoughts. When the girls were asked about the changes in themselves, they responded that they were able to think about gender and social issues in their own way, listened seriously to the opinions of others, and began to think about doing something on their own using the monitoring group activities. These results indicate that the QIP enhanced the girls’ non-cognitive abilities<sup>16</sup>, such as problem-solving, cooperation, communication, and leadership skills.

The activities of the monitoring group were not limited to simply planning various events, but in some groups, the girls acted as an advocacy group to deepen the understanding of gender issues among school teachers, other students



Photo 2-14: Life skills messages on play cards



Photo 2-15: Girls in WASH activities



Photo 2-16: Monitoring group discussing with local government officials

(boys and girls), parents, and the community at large. Photo 2-10 shows the efforts of a monitoring group in Rupandehi District. They prepared a placard with the words, “Stop trafficking in girls!” “Stop forced marriage!” “Stop Dowry!” “Listen to the radio and learn!” “Give Girls and Boys Equal Opportunities!” They presented the placards at the school assembly. In addition, as shown in Photo 2-11, girls’ involvement in WASH activities led school teachers to review the importance of separate toilets for girls and boys, the improvement of the toilet environment, and the method of distributing sanitary napkins. Similarly, as shown in Photo 2-12, they met with the mayors and deputy mayors of the local governments and exchanged opinions on what they had learned through the radio programs and monitoring activities. The students also requested a budget allocation focusing on girls’ education and the continuation of the radio programs, which received positive responses from several local government officials, including those from the Talkot Rural Municipality and Kamalamai Municipality. In this way, the understanding of gender among school teachers and government officials was enhanced by the initiatives of the monitoring group.

<sup>16</sup> Ability to express one's feelings, listen to the opinions of others, and challenge things, etc. An ability related to self-assertion, self-restraint, cooperation, and curiosity. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan)

Finally, as shown in Case 11, some girls started to send out messages on social media about topics in which they were interested, not as activities of the monitoring group, but as individual advocates. When a girl of a similar age group sent the messages, it made it easy for young girls to ask questions, sympathize, and seek help. It is a huge progress that girls are beginning to speak out on their own. The voice of the youth is precious, and we welcome her initiatives and look forward to her future activities.

**Case 11: “Stop child marriage!” disseminated through social media**

Asmita, who lives in Rupandehi District, learned about child marriage through a radio program. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, many children are connecting with strangers through social media, and an increasing number of girls are eloping (self-initiated marriage) or getting married. Asmita has been telling her friends that they should study now and that they should not get married at their age. Her activities are widely featured in a local newspaper.

**(5) Knowing role models**

In the life skills program, interviews with role models were conducted to help the girls understand that women can also be active in various fields. Nurses in charge of COVID-19 patients, midwives, entrepreneurs, athletes, journalists, NGO representatives, politicians, etc. participated and sent messages to the girls. One deputy mayor (a woman) said that it is very rewarding and worthwhile for a woman to become a politician because it allows her to make decisions from a different perspective than men, which helps to bring change in society. She advised girls to get rid of the stereotype that women are not suitable for leadership and actively participate in school events in addition to their studies to acquire planning and problem-solving skills in responsible positions. The interview episodes with role models were popular among the girls, and the response was so high that it became one of the most memorable episodes.

In addition to the radio programs, for girls, female FOs were role models that many girls looked up to. For example, the FO of Okhaldhunga District was selected as one of the 100 most influential youth by the 2020 Opportunities Hub for her dedicated social work in community activities as a leader of Janajati (ethnic caste) youth in a remote rural area. Since there are few young female leaders in rural areas, the girls were able to consult with an adolescent woman whom they admired, which made it easier for them to work together in the QIP.

**3-3. Output 3: Through Participating in an Essay Contest on "My Dream, My Future" (Mero Sapana: Mero Bhabisya), Student’s Motivation Toward Their Studies is Promoted**

For Output 3, an essay contest was held on the theme “My Dream, My Future,” connecting the learnings from the radio program with their own future dreams. The indicators and achievements of the activities of Output 3 are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Achievements of Output 3

Indicators	Achievements
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3-1 500 applicants in essay contest	<p>At the start of the project, the target was 500 applicants, but a total of 1,420 applicants (994 girls and 426 boys) applied, and six winners from first to sixth place were awarded.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="625 259 1399 443"> <thead> <tr> <th>Award</th> <th>Name of Students</th> <th>Obtained Score %</th> <th>Districts</th> <th>Schools</th> <th>Class</th> <th>Sex</th> <th>Ethnicity</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Mamata Chaudhary</td> <td>75%</td> <td>Rupandehi</td> <td>Janahit SS</td> <td>9</td> <td>Female</td> <td>Indigineous</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Muna Shrestha</td> <td>74%</td> <td>Okhaldhunga</td> <td>Narmadeshor SS</td> <td>10</td> <td>Female</td> <td>Janajati</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Kabita Shrestha</td> <td>73%</td> <td>Sidhuli</td> <td>Kamala Janajyoti SS</td> <td>10</td> <td>Female</td> <td>Janajati</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Piyush Sunuwar</td> <td>72%</td> <td>Okhaldhunga</td> <td>Narmadeshor SS</td> <td>9</td> <td>Male</td> <td>Dalit</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>Sita Shrestha</td> <td>71%</td> <td>Sindhuli</td> <td>Shree SS, Gadauli</td> <td>8</td> <td>Female</td> <td>Janajati</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>Samiksha Gyawali</td> <td>69%</td> <td>Rupandehi</td> <td>Shanti Namuna SS</td> <td>8</td> <td>Female</td> <td>Others</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Of the six students who won prizes, one was a boy (4th place), and the ethnic diversity and regions were selected without bias. In addition, the fourth- and sixth-place winners were students outside of the monitoring group, indicating that non-target students were also listening to and learning from the radio program.</p>	Award	Name of Students	Obtained Score %	Districts	Schools	Class	Sex	Ethnicity	1	Mamata Chaudhary	75%	Rupandehi	Janahit SS	9	Female	Indigineous	2	Muna Shrestha	74%	Okhaldhunga	Narmadeshor SS	10	Female	Janajati	3	Kabita Shrestha	73%	Sidhuli	Kamala Janajyoti SS	10	Female	Janajati	4	Piyush Sunuwar	72%	Okhaldhunga	Narmadeshor SS	9	Male	Dalit	5	Sita Shrestha	71%	Sindhuli	Shree SS, Gadauli	8	Female	Janajati	6	Samiksha Gyawali	69%	Rupandehi	Shanti Namuna SS	8	Female	Others
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3-2 Contents of awarded essays	<p>In evaluating the essays, selection criteria was: style (15%), sentence and organization (15%), subject centric focused writing-relevance of the theme regarding the radio program and gender (30%), and originality and creativity of students (40%).</p> <p>Mr. Amar Bahadur Singh, an education and essay specialist, who reviewed all the essays, commented that many of the essays linked the gender and social inclusion issues that they experienced during the COVID-19 with what they learned from the radio program, and accurately captured what they can do to solve social issues. He appreciated the fact that the QIP provided an opportunity for the students to continue learning to achieve their dreams.</p>																																																								

In the process of implementing Output 3, the following are changes observed and points that were taken with due consideration from a gender perspective.

### **(1) Motivation to learn through setting their own goals**

The essay contest was initially estimated for 500 students, but it received a large number of entries: 1,420 (994 girls and 426 boys). This means that not only the members of the monitoring group listened to the radio, but many other students also listened, which indicates that the “Student to Student approach” was effective in disseminating the message to other students.

According to the FOs and school teachers, one of the reasons for the large number of entries was that it was well known that the essay contest was open not only for the monitoring group but also for other students. This motivated students outside the monitoring group to take up the challenge and actively listen to the radio program.

### **(2) Increasing understanding and awareness of gender and social issues**

In the essay contest, relevance to the content of the radio program and accuracy regarding gender issues were some of the evaluation criteria. The chairperson of the evaluation committee commented that many of the essays received were written in a way that drew gender issues and social issues to their own attention, confirming that the participants’ understanding and awareness of gender issues were enhanced. The awarded essays were selected for their deep insights into the causes of harmful social practices and how the promotion of positive action can contribute to the promotion of gender equality. The award ceremony was held on Zoom, and in their speeches, many

of the awarded participants made powerful statements such as, “The radio program was one of the things I looked forward to while staying at home” and “I want to contribute to the development of my village.” This indicated that the radio program and essay contest gave the participants an opportunity to deepen their learning and make their own commitments.

#### 4. Achievement of Project Objective and Analysis of the Hypothesis

##### 4-1. Achievement of Project Objective

The QIP was conducted for the following purpose: “Through gender-responsive radio educational programs, educational opportunities are provided to girls during school closure and girls attain life skills that can help raise their motivation toward the continuation of their studies” As indicated in the achievement of the QIP purpose in Table 2-8, all the target students in the monitoring group (600 students) were planning to return to school<sup>17</sup>, and according to the school data, no student dropped out. In addition, the monitoring group played a key role in conducting various activities related to gender and social inclusion in their schools, which created an environment that enabled girls to continue their studies. These facts indicate that the objective of the QIP was achieved.

Table 8: Achievements of the QIP objective

Indicators	Achievements
80% of girls in monitoring group re-enroll in schools	Based on the results of the end-line survey, the monitoring group of 60 schools (9 girls and 1 boy), all 600 students in total, have the intention to return to school, and there are no dropouts in the school data.
60% of girls in monitoring group pass proficiency test	98% of girls/boys from monitoring group passed the proficiency test.
80% of girls in monitoring group attain life skills	From the record of the worksheets used by the monitoring group members, it confirmed that all of them listen to the radio programs regularly. In addition, all the members of the monitoring group eagerly participated in planning and managing the gender related activities, and also took part in the essay contest. These facts indicates that they have acquired knowledge about gender and have attained life skills.

The following section describes the results of the analysis of the hypothesis set for the QIP.

##### 4-1. Hypothesis 1: Through the Provision of Learning Opportunities through Radio Programs on Academic and Life Skills and the Activities of Monitoring Groups, Girls’ Motivation toward Their Studies is Maintained and the Number of Dropouts is Reduced

After analyzing information from the monitoring group activities, end-line surveys, and focus group discussions with stakeholders, it was identified that conducting various activities to build agency (an individual’s aspirations, knowledge, skills, and abilities) of girls through the QIP, helps to maintain girls’ motivation to study. The reasons for this are as follows.

###### (1) Establishing girls’ studying habits

With the closure of the school, students were self-studying, but it was difficult for them to maintain their motivation. However, after the commencement of the QIP, 97% of the students reported that they began to study when the radio

<sup>17</sup> REED Nepal (2021) Final Report

program started broadcasting, and the same percentage of their parents also reported the same<sup>18</sup>. This indicates that listening to the radio program re-established the habit of studying.

In addition, the school principal and the GESI focal teachers appreciated the radio program because radio is a device that rural students can use, providing learning opportunities for girls from poor families in rural areas who have been left out of online education under COVID-19. They also highly appreciated that students' learning was enhanced by a learning system that involved not only listening to the radio programs but also reflecting on their learning through worksheets and periodic monitoring. Similarly, many teachers commented that the performance of the monitoring group members was higher than that of the non-monitoring group members because they had higher motivation, indicating that the radio program contributed to maintaining girls' motivation to study.

## **(2) Promoting understanding of gender issues**

In the life skills program, episodes related to the challenges faced by women and girls under the COVID-19 pandemic were broadcast, which helped listeners to deepen their understanding of gender issues. For example, as stated in 2-3-2 (1), as a result of having a correct understanding of SGBV, the number of students who answered the question "have you faced SGBV or do you know someone experiencing SGBV?" increased from 5.9% to 13.4%, respectively. It was also observed that one girl who listened to the SGBV episode realized that the behavior she was receiving from the son of the family for whom she was working as a domestic helper was SGBV, and she discussed it with the GESI focal teacher, which helped her to receive proper support. This shows that acquiring the correct knowledge helps to prevent girls from becoming victims of SGBV and removes the obstacles that girls face in accessing education.

## **(3) Improving girls' self-esteem through participation in monitoring groups**

According to the principal, many girls were too shy to speak up or tended to give up easily, thinking that they could not do it anyway. In the end-line survey, 68% of the girls in the monitoring groups said that they had developed confidence in speaking<sup>19</sup>. This indicates that their self-esteem increased through a series of small successes brought about by exchanging opinions among the monitoring group members and organizing various events. For example, through essay, poem, and speech contests, girls had more opportunities to express their feelings in front of others, and girls also improved their problem-solving skills through the activities of the monitoring group. As a result, they strengthened their self-esteem, which motivated them to work harder in their regular studies and gradually improved their motivation to study.

## **(4) Improving girls' non-cognitive skills through monitoring group activities**

As mentioned in 2-3-2 (4), through the life skills program, girls began to see gender issues as their own challenges and take action to solve them through the process of "learn," "think," and "put into action." For example, for the challenge of "girls not going to school during menstruation," many efforts were made as shown below.

- Awareness-raising activities through discussions, essay and poem contests, etc.
- Workshops by health volunteers on reproductive health, including boys

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<sup>18</sup> REED Nepal (2021) End-line Survey Report

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

- Improving the method of distributing sanitary napkins in schools
- Improving the toilet environment (no separate toilets for boys and girls, dirty toilets, difficulty, no place to dispose of sanitary napkins)

Through these activities, the attitudes of school teachers, boys, and girls changed, and the percentage of girls who said that they would skip school during menstruation dropped from 12% to 9.4%, which means that the obstacles for girls to continue studying had decreased to some extent. In addition, apart from this case, girls actively worked to improve their disadvantaged situation by submitting a request to the local government to secure the GESI budget so that they could initiate gender equality activities. They also introduced mixed seating arrangements in classrooms, indicating that gender equality starts at school. These processes enhanced their non-cognitive skills, such as problem-solving, cooperation, and communication skills. It is said that higher non-cognitive skills are associated with higher school attendance and even impact students' later education and employment status<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, the QIP contributed to maintaining and improving the girls' motivation to study.

The examples of girls' studying habits, promotion of understanding of gender issues, and improvement in self-esteem and non-cognitive skills confirm that “through the provision of learning opportunities through radio programs on academic and life skills and the activities of monitoring groups, girls' motivation toward their studies is maintained and the number of dropping out of schools is reduced.”

#### **4-3. Hypothesis 2: An Understanding of the Challenges Facing Girls During the COVID-19 pandemic by the Stakeholders (Parents, Teachers, Local Government, Classmates) Surrounding the Girls Will Enable the Girls to Continue Their Education**

The QIP tried to transform the gender awareness and behavior change of various stakeholders by implementing activities to change and balance power relationships among families, boys, school teachers, local communities, and the media. In particular, since the monitoring groups actively worked with various stakeholders, this challenges us to change the existing structure and system. For example, school teachers and local government officials reviewed the school management system from a gender perspective, and local government officials understood the importance of allocating a budget for girls' education. This has improved the environment for girls to continue their studies. The reasons are described in the following five points.

##### **(1) Promote parents' understanding on the importance of continuing girls' education**

Whether girls can continue their education is greatly influenced by their parents' awareness of education. According to the end-line survey, almost 90% of the parents interviewed replied that they assisted their child by calling them at the time of the broadcast, not asking them to do household chores during the radio program, and assisting in the maintenance of the radio, such as changing batteries and tuning the radio. This shows that the parents helped the girls continue their learning during the radio program.

In addition, 98.6% of the respondent mothers and 98.2% of the respondent fathers replied that they had listened to the radio program several times. 22% of the respondent mothers and 14% of the respondent fathers said they listened

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<sup>20</sup> Toda, Tsuru, and Kume (2014) Impact of childhood family environment and non-cognitive abilities on educational background, employment status and wages (Japanese Title translated into English by the Survey team), RIETI Discussion Paper Series 14-J-019

to the radio program with their children regularly. This indicates that because the program was broadcast at a time when the family members were together, they talked about gender issues, such as the increase in violence and online harassment under COVID-19. In addition, there were other factors that led to changing parents' attitudes and mindsets. For example, one of the GESI focal teachers shared a story of a mother whose husband did not care about his daughter, saying that she was a burden on the family, but after listening to the radio programs and learning that many women were actively working in society, he stopped discouraging the girl from going to school. The principal also shared that parents who had never shown interest in school events suddenly started participating. When the parents were asked why, they said that they listened to the radio program with their children and realized that it was important for their daughters to get an education. While there are still many parents in rural areas who do not see the importance of education, it can be said that the QIP helped to increase parents' understanding regarding the importance of the continuation of girls' education.

## **(2) Changes in gender awareness of boys**

Of the ten students in the monitoring group, one was to be a boy. At first, some boys felt uncomfortable being the only boy in the group, but through the activities of the monitoring group, they came to understand that gender issues are not only for girls, but both boys and girls need to think about together. Since the monitoring group was able to obtain full cooperation from the school, various activities were organized. Boys also participated in all the events, including the seminar on reproductive health, which gradually increased their gender awareness.

The boys in the monitoring group commented that they had never thought about the differences between boys and girls, but now they realized that there were gaps in their own lives; for example, teachers tended to favor boys and leave girls behind, and girls were more likely to drop out of school. The fact that as many as 426 boys participated in the essay contest held at the end of the QIP indicates that the QIP provided an opportunity for boys to think about gender challenges.

According to the principal and the teachers, adolescent boys sometimes tease girls about their physical appearance, which makes them feel uncomfortable, causing them to stop coming to school. However, some teachers said that the QIP has reduced such conflicts and changed the relationship among the students by allowing them to work together regardless of gender, ethnicity, or disability.

## **(3) Changes in gender awareness among school teachers**

When the principals of the target schools were asked about their knowledge of gender-responsive teaching and school management, 36.7% (i.e., about one-third of the principals), answered that they had never been particularly aware of it, indicating that gender-responsive teaching and efforts were limited before the QIP. The "GESI Responsive School Education Guideline/Facilitation Handbook" was developed for the QIP, and training was conducted. The GESI focal teachers and other teachers were actively involved in supporting the monitoring groups. As a result, some teachers from the target schools commented that they initially thought that this project was for students, but later realized that it was for the teachers themselves because it made them aware of the risks faced by vulnerable students under COVID-19 and provided them with many useful references such as a gender-responsive teaching method. In fact, when the students were asked if the teachers' teaching methods had changed, 97.4% of

the students gave feedback that the teachers were now more proactive in seeking the opinions of the girls and treating them equally<sup>21</sup>.

To promote gender-responsive school management both in terms of teaching methods and in terms of institutions, efforts have been promoted, such as allocating GESI focal teachers, putting a suggestion box in schools for students to make suggestions to teachers regarding SGBV-related issues and problems, and developing a complaint handling mechanism to appropriately respond to these suggestions.

#### **(4) Local government putting priority on girls' education under the COVID-19 pandemic**

In implementing the QIP, the local government was involved from the initial stage of selecting the target schools to promote an understanding of the challenges girls face under the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of girls' education. To build good relationships, FOs regularly reported on their activities, local government officials observed the monitoring group's activities, and female deputy mayors were interviewed for career counseling during the radio program. As a result, in a focus group discussion with government officials, there were positive comments such as, "The life skills program not only led to the empowerment of girls but also helped boys and their families understand gender issues, thus creating a positive chain effect. At a time when society is facing difficulties, this radio program was highly significant because it highlighted the challenges and risks girls are facing in an easy-to-understand manner to a wider audience." Some municipalities made institutionalized decisions by promising to secure a budget to promote girls' education in the next fiscal year.

#### **(5) Changes in the media**

The radio programs were broadcast to the target areas through 10 radio stations, but they began to rebroadcast the programs on their own. This is because the radio program managers observed girls becoming empowered and vocal after participating in the QIP. They also received more responses from listeners, which made them understand the importance of broadcasting life skills programs and gender-related public service announcements, especially during the time of COVID-19.

According to the people in charge of the radio station, after broadcasting the QIP, station staff discussed gender issues. For example, some felt that opinions on gender-related issues should be prioritized when deciding the order of news to be covered, and because listeners are highly influenced by the information they receive from the media, the media should be more proactive in covering gender-related news that will contribute to the promotion of gender equality. In fact, even after the completion of the QIP, Radio Lumbini in Rupandehi District has been producing and broadcasting awareness programs on child marriage in collaboration with the students in the monitoring group.

These changes confirmed the hypothesis that "An understanding of the challenges facing girls during the COVID-19 pandemic by the stakeholders (parents, teachers, local government, classmates) surrounding the girls will enable the girls to continue their education."

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<sup>21</sup> REED Nepal (2021) End-line Survey Report

## **5. Lessons Learned from Quick Impact Project under COVID-19**

The following lessons were drawn from the QIP on gender equality and women's empowerment as a response to the impact of COVID-19.

### **(1) In countries where the digital divide is large, it is necessary to simultaneously promote distance education as an alternative to online education**

In countries such as Nepal, where there is a digital divide between urban and rural areas, there is a concern that promoting online education will further widen the education gap. Given the digital gender gap in rural areas, there is a need to promote alternative distance education using devices that girls and vulnerable people can afford and that do not require high technology.

### **(2) Support for parents is also essential to create a learning environment for girls**

In normal times, girls attend classes at school, where the learning environment is relatively organized, but in distance education, parents need to set up the learning environment, and their cooperation is essential. However, the economic status, education level, and Nepali language skills of the parents make it difficult for some parents to provide appropriate support to their children. In addition, under COVID-19, girls are also responsible for unpaid care work, making it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully explain to parents how to use the devices, the broadcasting hours, and the contents of distance education and to set up a support system at home.

### **(3) In distance education, in addition to developing gender-responsive content, developing supplementary materials and by periodical follow leads to retention and continuation of studies**

In distance education, listeners cannot understand if school lessons are simply broadcast. It is necessary to develop content that matches the characteristics of each device. In addition, unless supplementary educational materials are prepared in line with the contents, and periodic follow-ups are conducted, it will be difficult to retain and continue learning just from the broadcast content.

### **(4) Support for high-risk girls can be provided by volunteers who are near**

In mountainous regions like Nepal, where villages are scattered, it is difficult for teachers to provide individual academic guidance. For girls and students who are at a high risk of dropping out, local volunteers, such as FOs, can play a big role. In the QIP, FOs provided regular study guidance and helped the girls to establish study habits and maintain their motivation to study. It is also important that adolescent girls have someone close to them on whom they can rely for advice in uncertain situations. It can be said that in an emergency situation like COVID-19, establishing a system to support high-risk girls and students by assigning persons from the same community would be helpful.

### **(5) Dissemination of gender issues during emergencies via media can help avoid risks to girls**

The media can send important messages to a wide audience. The QIP's intentionally disseminated gender-related programs and public service announcements, which promoted gender understanding among many stakeholders,

including parents, boys, school teachers, and the local government, led to the creation of an environment where girls could continue their education. Therefore, actively using the media to raise awareness is effective in emergency situations.

**(6) Acquiring life skills is an effective way to maintain motivation to study**

While school dropout due to poor academic performance is a challenge under COVID-19, it is equally a serious challenge when girls lose their goals and lose the motivation to study. In emergency situations, providing gender-focused programs that foster life skills, such as problem-solving by the girls themselves, can increase self-esteem and non-cognitive abilities in the girls and can help them maintain the motivation to study.

**(7) Remote project management using the strengths of social media and online tools is also effective**

In addition to the fact that the target areas of this QIP were in remote areas, the spread of COVID-19 limited mobility, making it difficult for the staff at REED's Kathmandu headquarters to conduct monitor the project. However, the FOs used SNS to report on the activities of the monitoring groups, which enabled them to understand the status of the field activities in a timely manner and to solve problems. In addition, focal group discussions (using Zoom) with principals, GESI focal teachers, radio stations, and local government officials, who were originally scheduled to be interviewed individually, were effective in generating diverse opinions and learning among the participants. In the post-COVID-19 era, combining social media and online tools with field activities can enable more effective and efficient project management.